



Midwest Child Care Research Consortium: Child Care in the Heartland

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Questions:

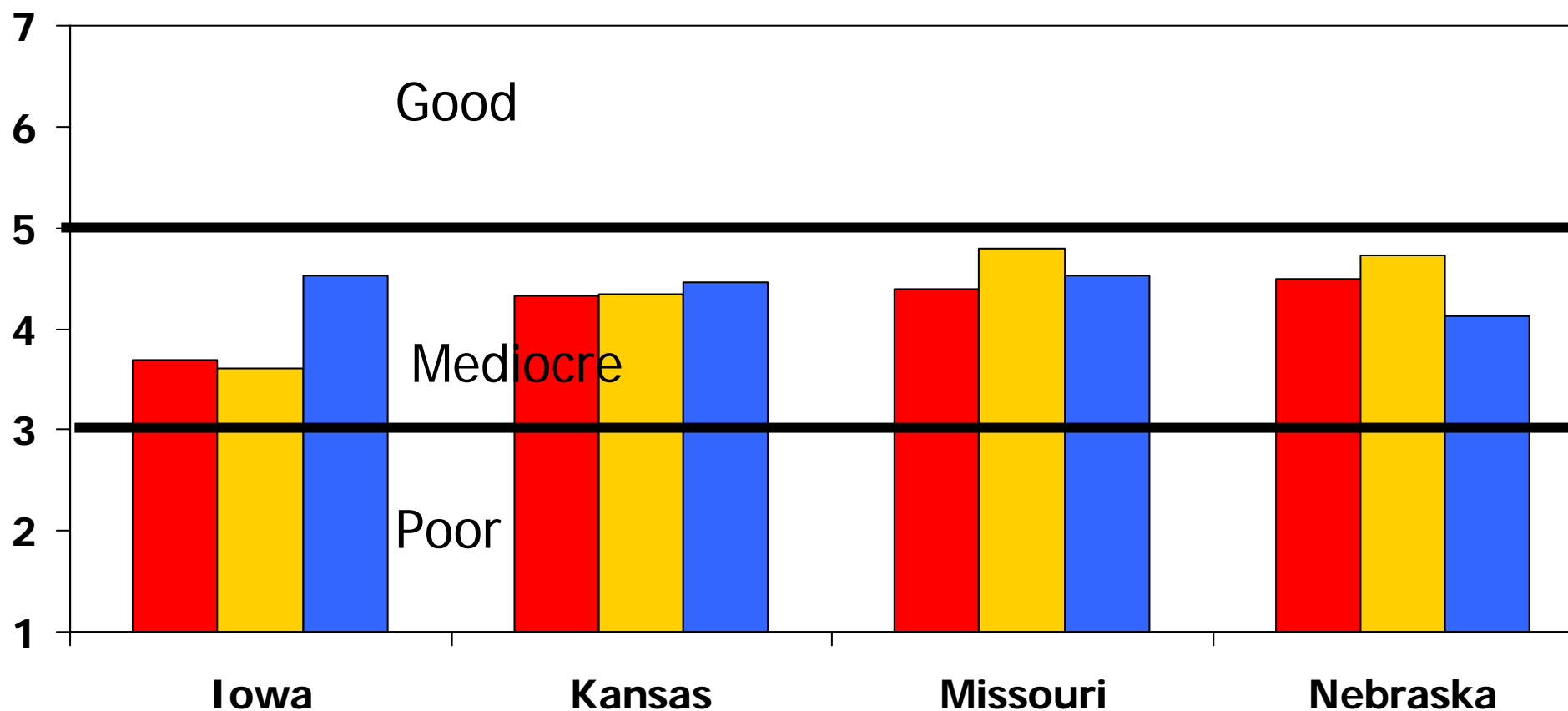
- What is quality of care observed in infant center, preschool center, and family child care homes?
- What are characteristics of the child care (full-day, full-year) workforce in four Midwest states?
- Across the Midwest, what policy factors seem to be important to quality?

Child Care Quality by State and Type of Care, $N = 365$

■ Infant Center

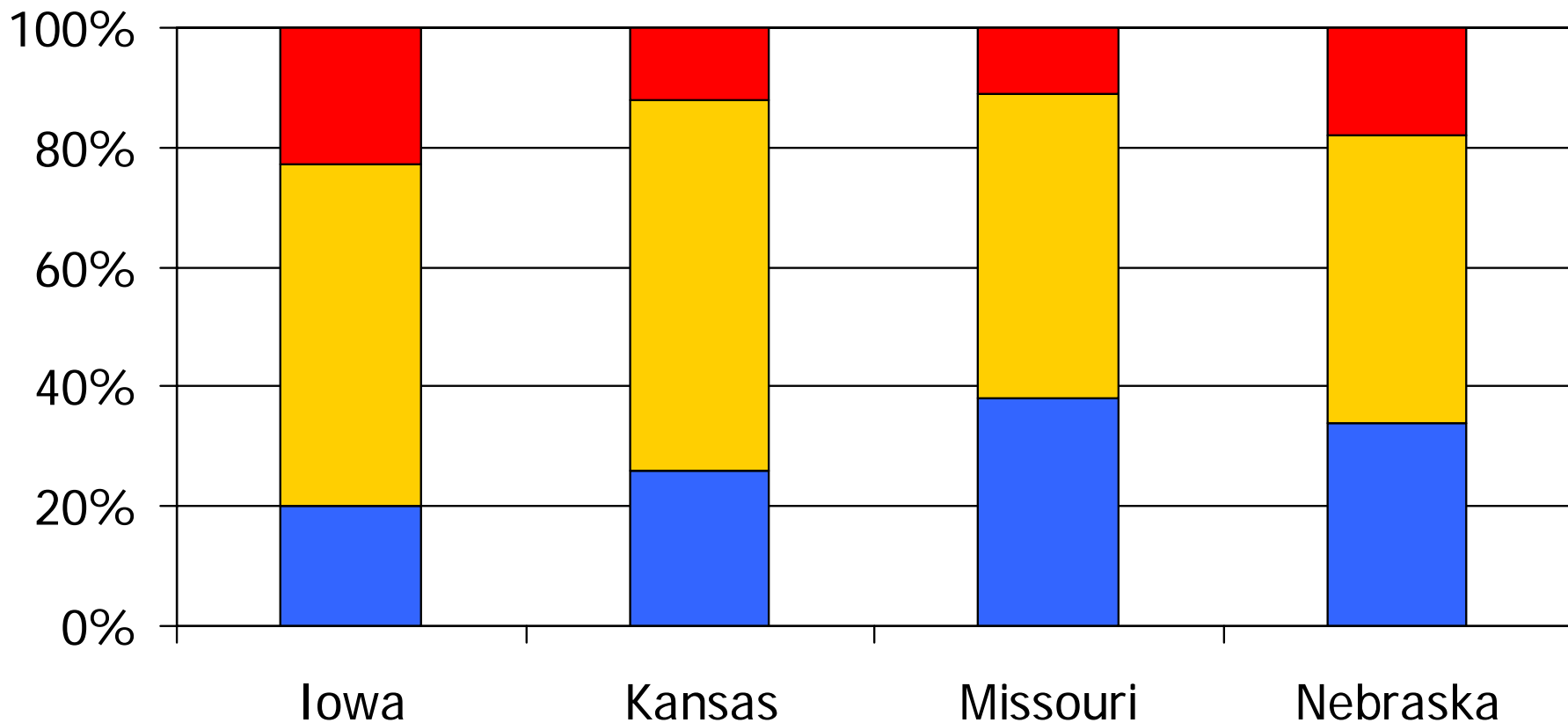
■ Family Care

■ Preschool Center

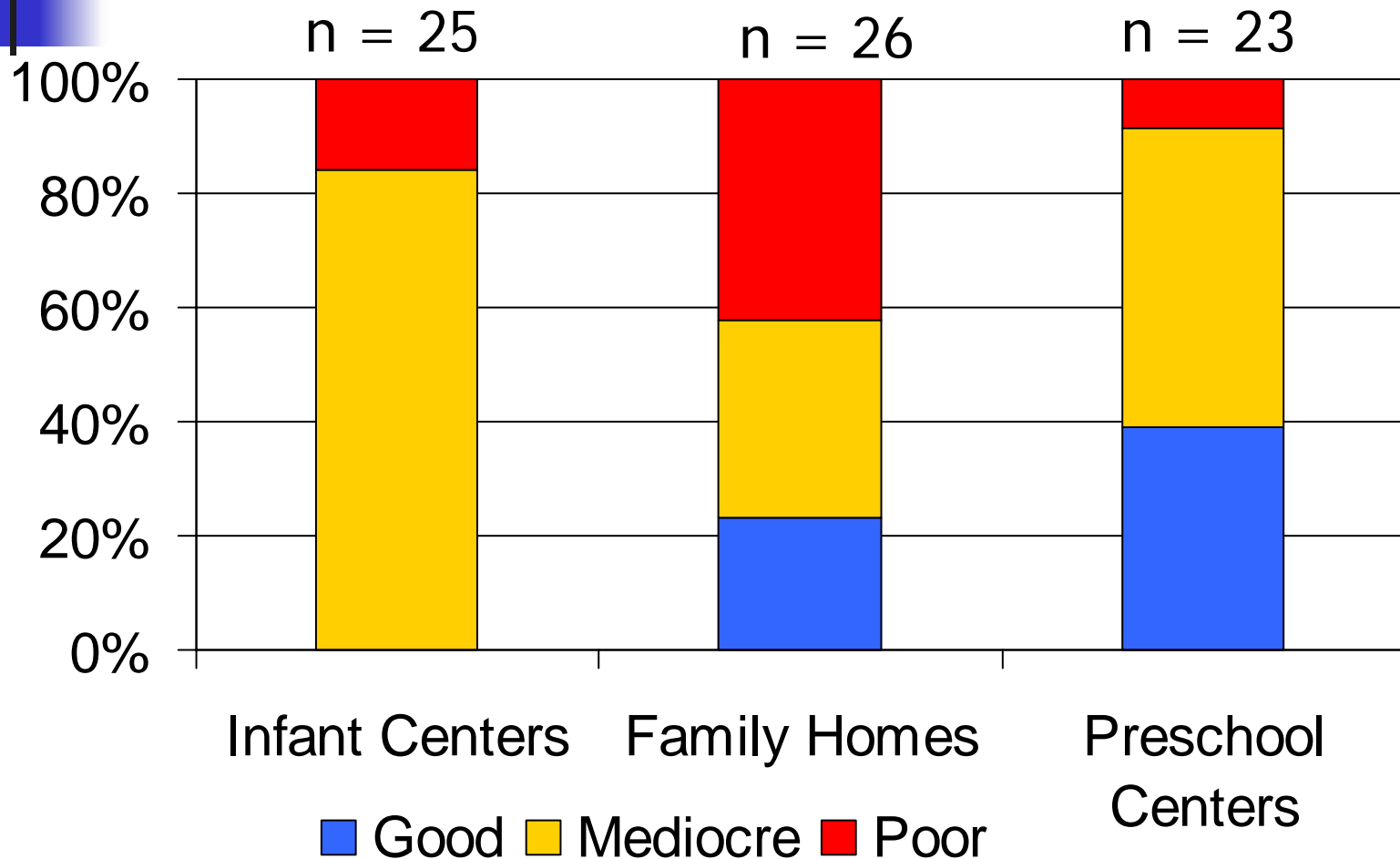


Percentage of Midwest Care At Each Quality Level, $N = 365$

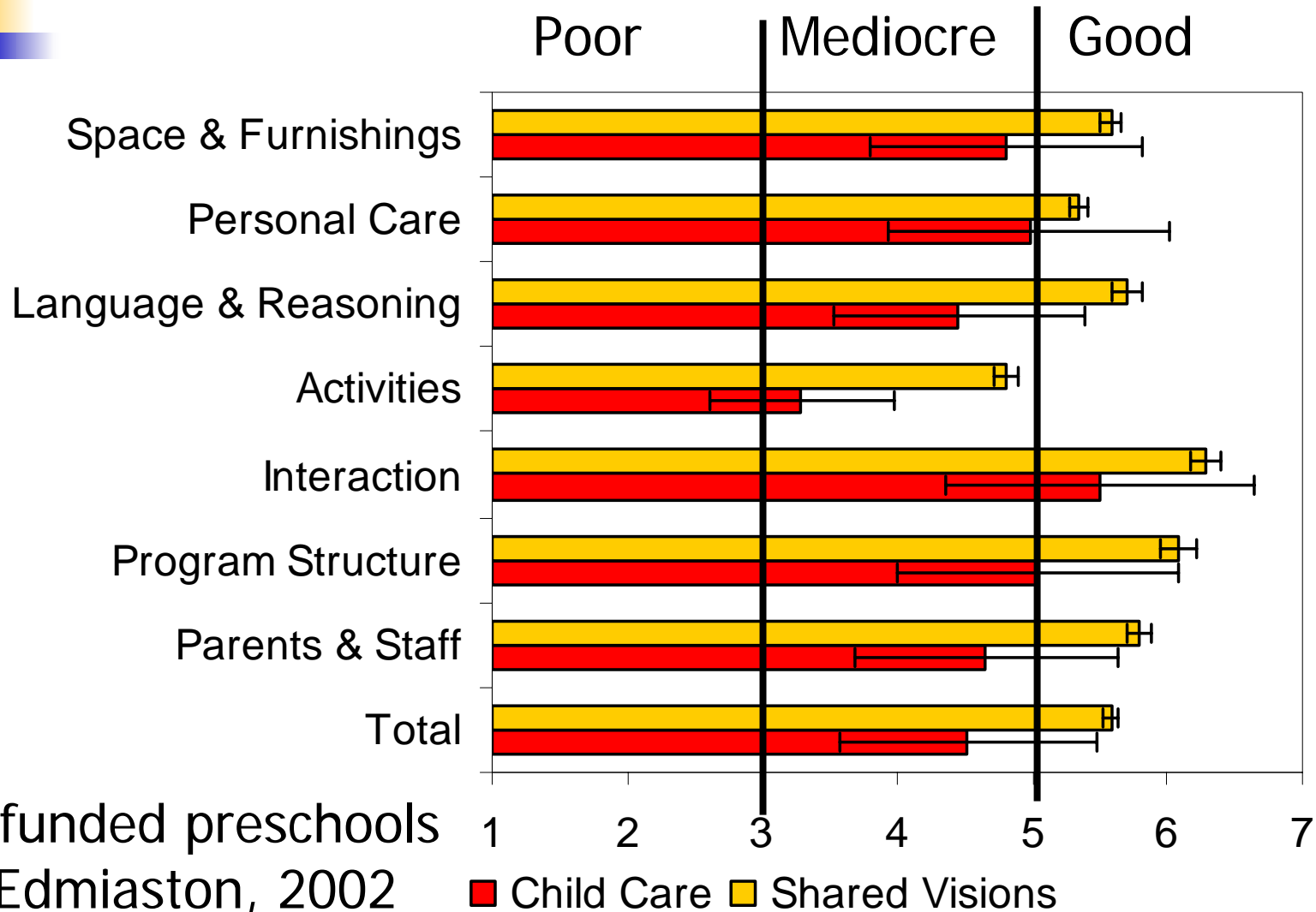
■ Good ■ Mediocre ■ Poor



Percentage of Iowa Care at each Quality Level



In Iowa, Shared Visions Programs* are higher in quality than preschool child care centers:

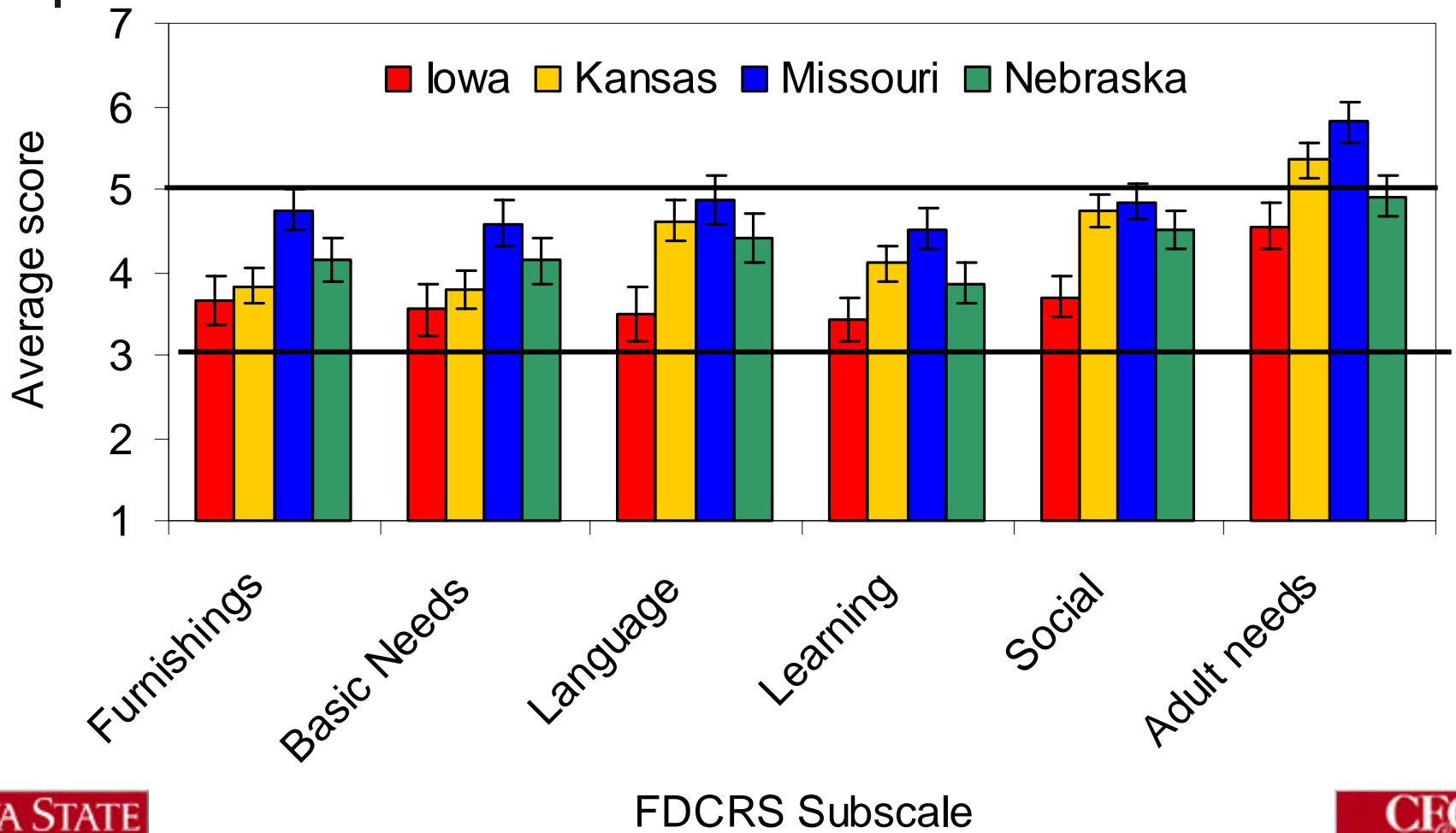


*state-funded preschools

Zan & Edmiaston, 2002

■ Child Care ■ Shared Visions

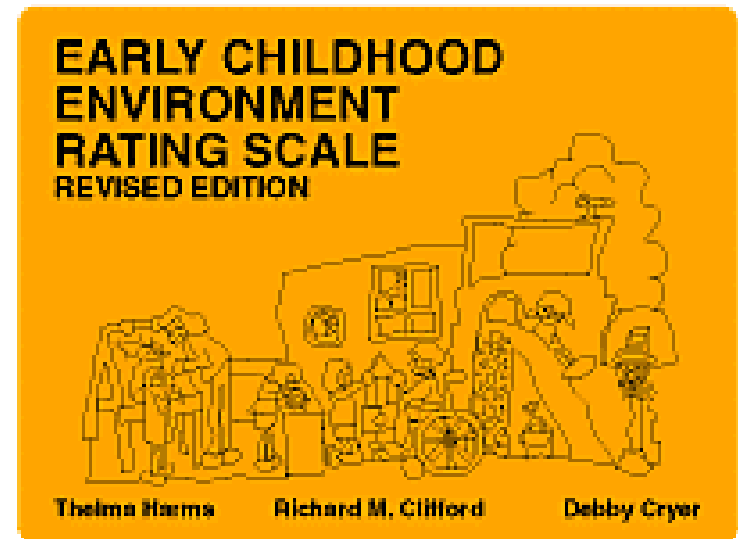
Family Child Care Comparisons across States



What aspects of the program were observed?

ECERS-Revised Areas:

- Space and Furnishings
- Personal Care Routines
- Language-Reasoning
- Activities
- Interaction
- Program Structure
- Parents and Staff





Characteristics of ECERS, ITERS, FDCRS Scales

- Each item scored on 7-point Likert-type scale from Inadequate (1) ↔ Excellent (7)
- Good programs*: Average score ≥ 5
- Mediocre Programs*: Average score < 5 and ≥ 3
- Poor Programs*: Average score < 3
- Children in good programs*
 - Better cognitive, language, & social development in preschool & early grades
 - More positive mother-child interactions

*Cost, Quality, & Outcomes Study, 1995

What is Good Quality? (ECERS, ITERS, FDCRS)

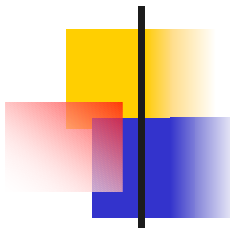
Informal use of language:

- Children allowed to talk much of the day
- Many caregiver-child conversations during free play and routines
- Language is primarily used by caregiver to exchange information with children and for social interaction
- Caregivers add information to expand on ideas presented by children.
- Caregivers encourage communication among children.

Predicts higher academic skills in school

How do Iowa caregivers compare?

Question	Midwest	Iowa
Average Annual Earnings	\$13,900	\$12,200
Average training hours completed (exceeds state req'ts)	35	21
	$N = 2022$	$n = 408$



Comparing Iowa caregivers with those in Missouri, Nebraska, & Kansas

Iowa:

- Lower wages
- Fewer training hours
- More likely to report they would do other work if they could
- Less likely to report receiving training needed to do the job
- Lower self-report quality factors

N = 2022



What factors relate to quality across the Midwest?

- Membership in professional organizations
- Employee health benefits in center-based programs
- Belief that child care is career or profession
- ***Not*** wanting to do other work
- Having an annual conference with parents



What factors relate to quality across the Midwest?

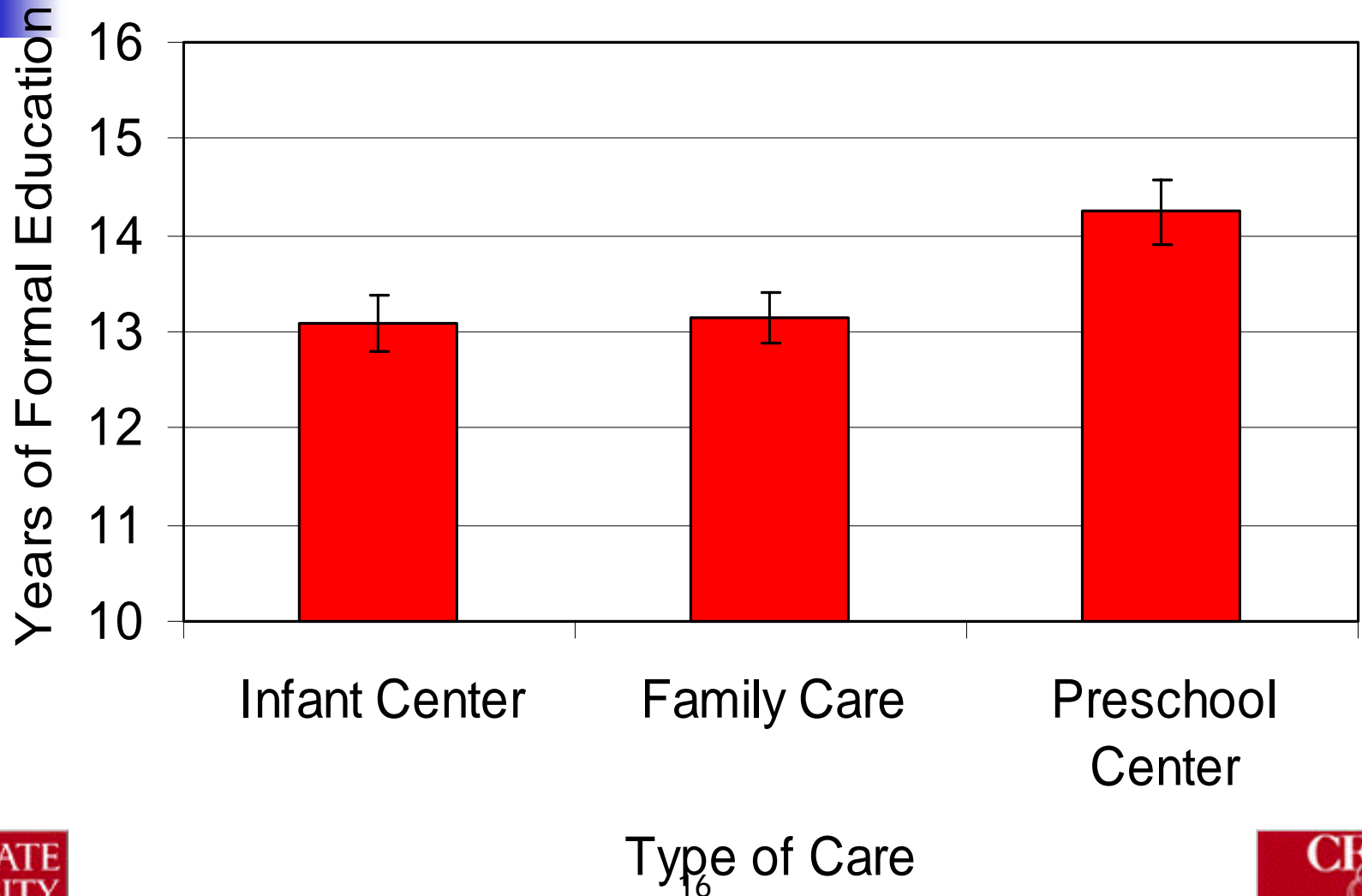
- Formal Education
- Child Development Associate credential
- Accreditation
- First aid training
- USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program
- Training hours over 12 and 24
- Partnerships between child care and Early Head Start/Head Start programs



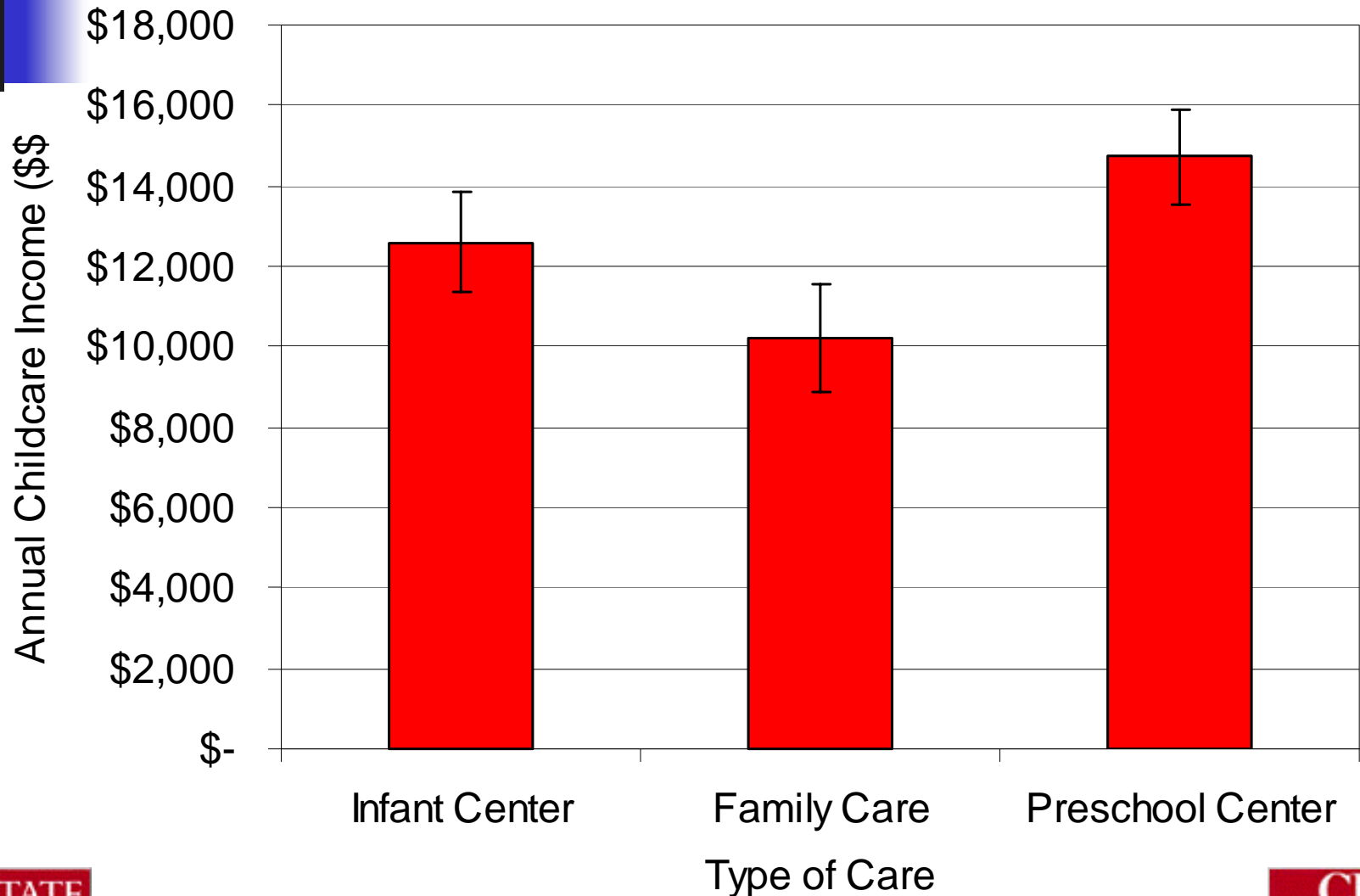
What else predicts poor quality in family child care?

- **Work While Child is Young**
- **Job with a Paycheck**
- **Helping Someone Out**

In Iowa, observed preschool center caregivers have the most years of formal education:

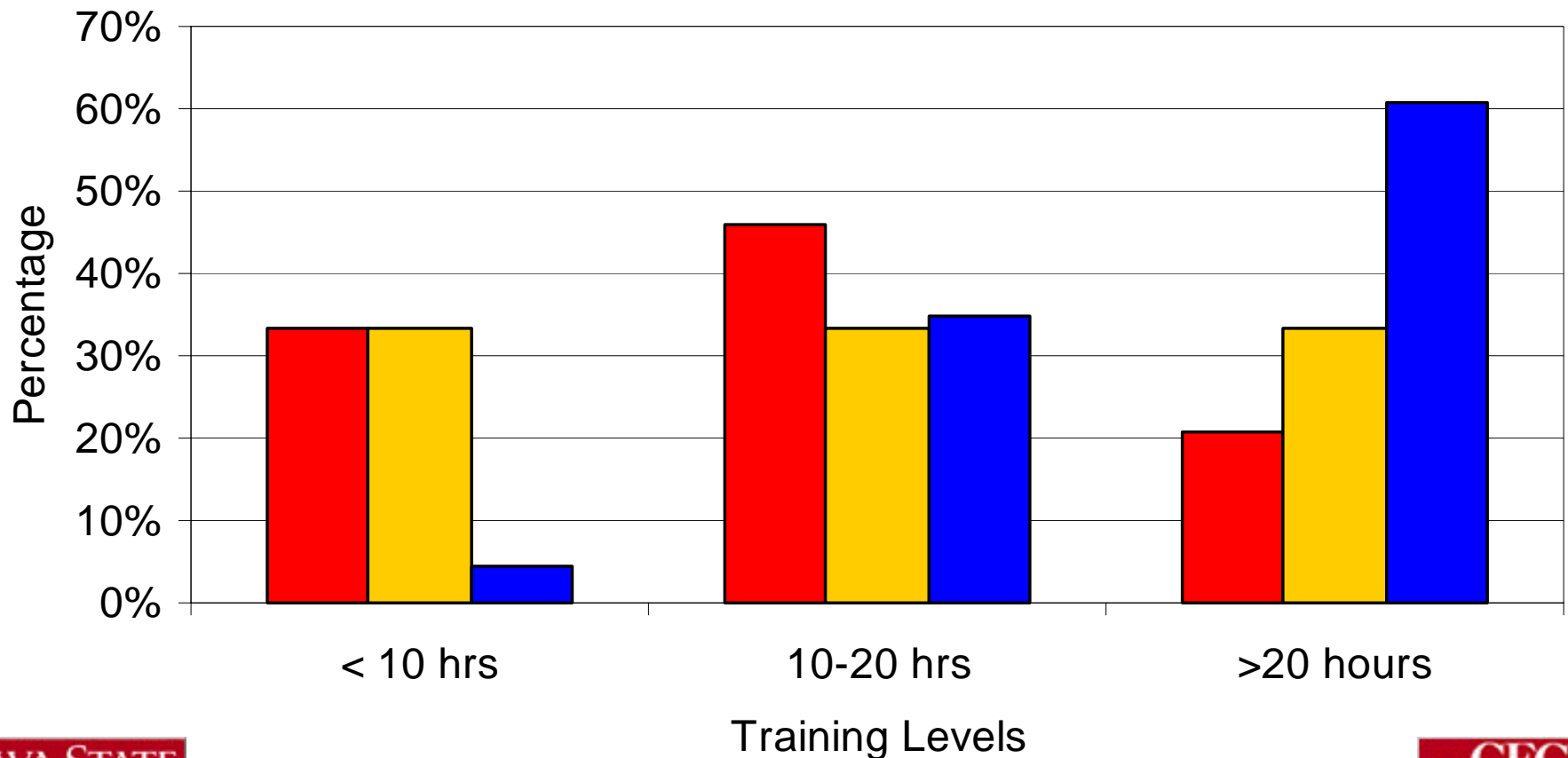


In Iowa, observed preschool center caregivers earn the highest salaries



In Iowa, one-third of observed infant center and family caregivers have not completed 10 hours of training this year:

■ Infant Center ■ Family Care ■ Preschool Center





Midwest Policy Conclusions

- **Quality is augmented by**

- Regulation
- Enforcement
- Tiered Reimbursement for Accreditation
- Initiatives that Target Quality
- Initiatives for Professional Development



Policy Context for Quality in Iowa

Less strict regulatory environment

- No licensing for family child care homes
- Less strict center regulations

■ Few collaborations between Head Start and child care

- Few Iowa child care programs can meet Head Start Program Performance Standards

■ Fewer initiatives to support quality or professional development

- Fewer federal quality dollars spent on evidence-based professional development programs (e.g., CDA) at state or local levels



Why improve child care in Iowa?

- **School Readiness**

- Language, literacy, and social skills predict school performance

- **Economic Development**

- **Lost productivity**

- Caring for sick children
- Seeking safe, nurturing child care

- **Lost recruitment**

- Highest percentage of preschoolers with both parents in work force
- Second highest per capita rate of child abuse in child care

Voluntary registration is confusing...

- "Registration is an indicator to parents that I provide safe and quality care."
 - **"Yes!"** 78% registered providers
 - **"No!"** 58% non-registered providers
 - "It doesn't mean anything. I was registered for four years and did not get inspected once. I sent for and got my registration through the mail."

Source: ISU Extension (CD-DIAL) Larson & Hegland, Iowa Family₂₂ Child Care Survey (2003)



Regulation helps *poor* quality care improve

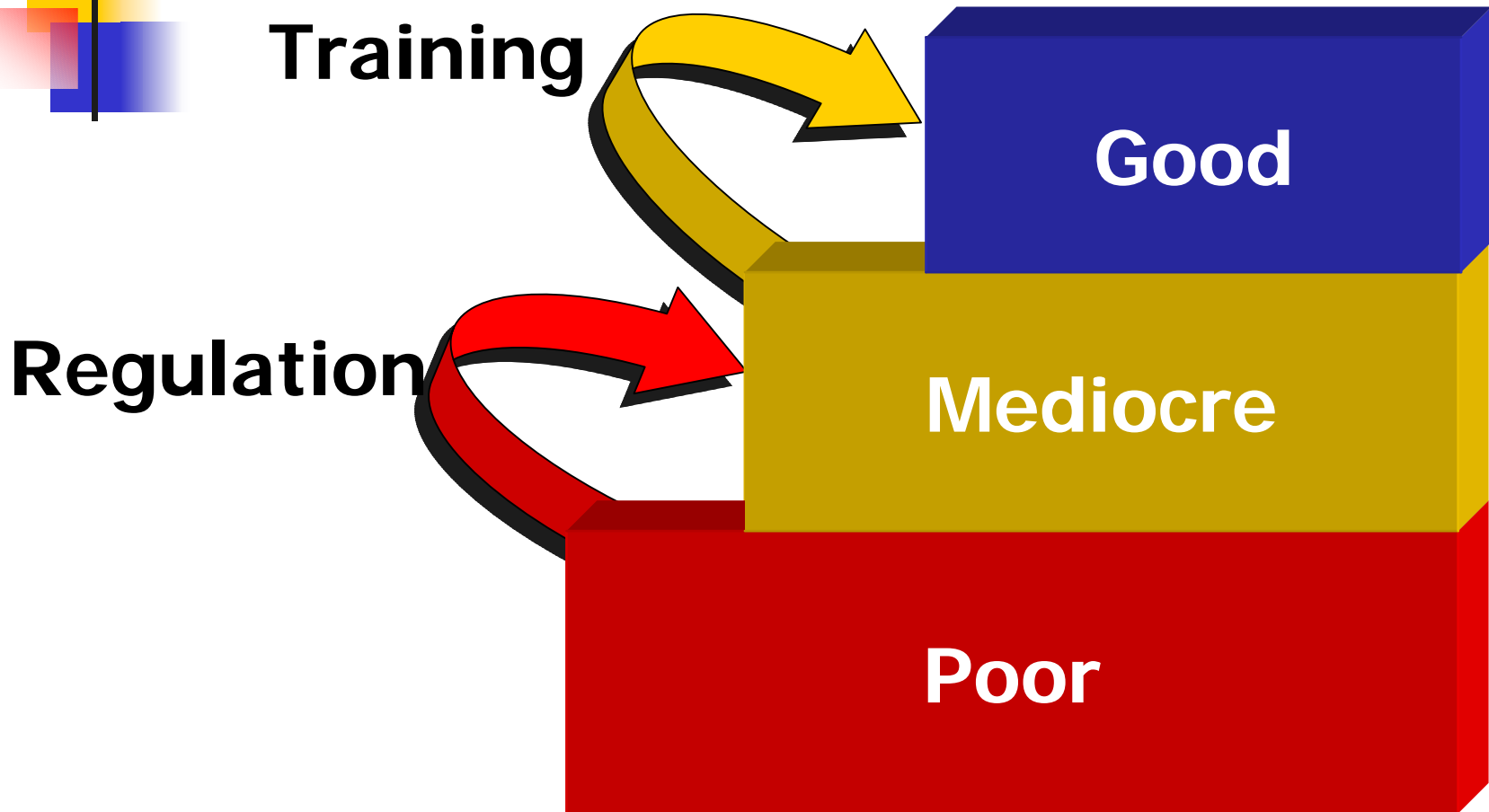
- **Parents choose care based on what they can see**
 - Quality of interaction between caregiver and parents
 - Quality of interaction between caregiver and children
- **Regulation provides consumer protection for what parents *cannot* see**
 - Health & safety standards
- **Regulation protects consumers**
 - Gives parents choices
- **Regulation helps *keep* good caregivers**
 - Persuades poor caregivers to find other employment



Training helps *mediocre* quality care improve

- Other states: Performance-based training programs
 - Linked to good quality (e.g., CDA)
- Iowa uses training to persuade providers to
 - Participate in training
 - Register voluntarily
- Results of Iowa training show
 - Outputs, *not* outcomes
- Therefore, training provides an inefficient and ineffective substitute for regulation

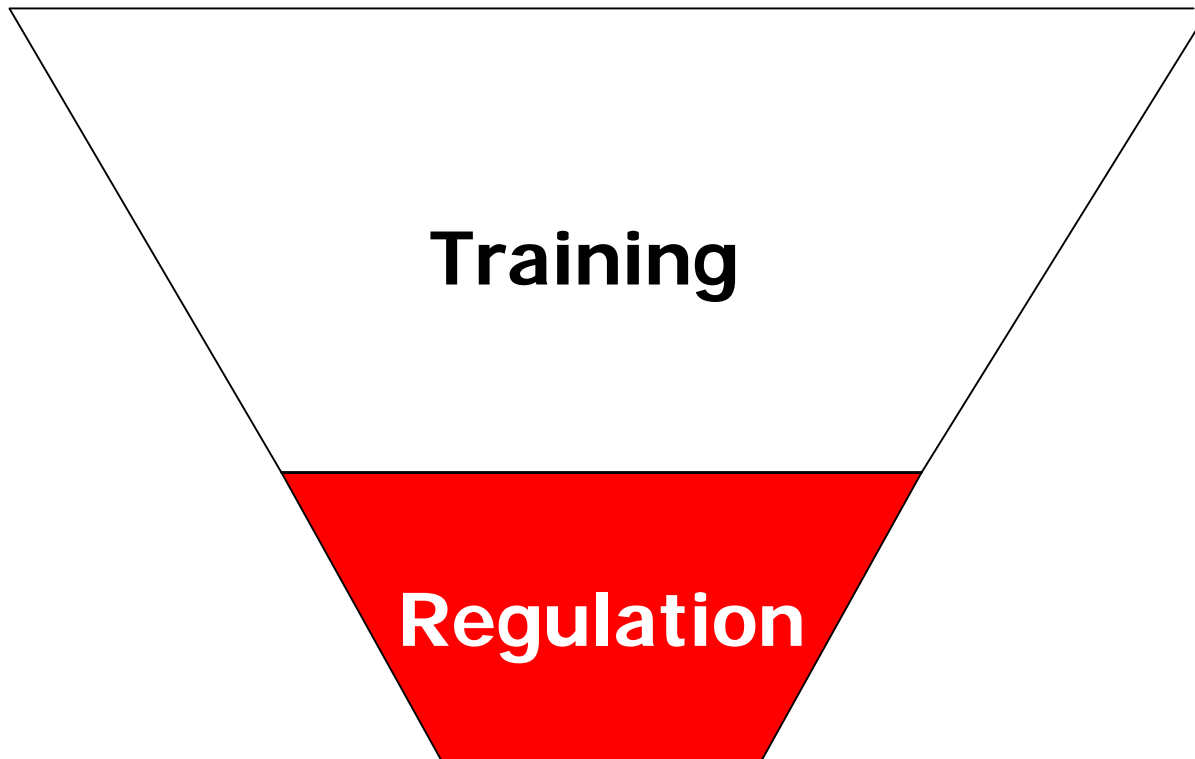
Regulation, training, & quality



**Child Care
Quality Levels**

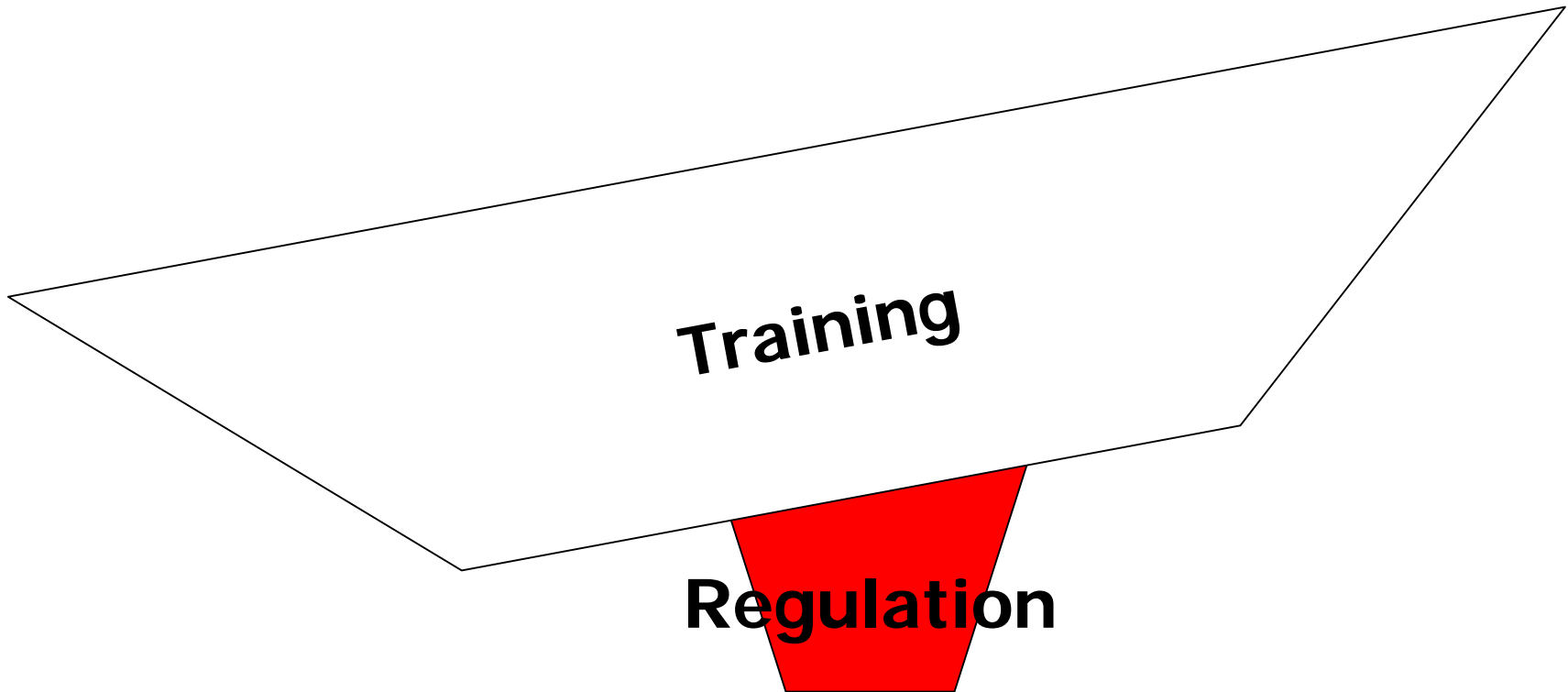


Training, Regulation, & Quality in Other States





Training, Regulation, & Quality in Iowa



To improve quality of child care in Iowa:

- Improve regulation and enforcement
 - Provide consumer protection for safe, nurturing family child care
- Provide professional development opportunities
 - Use performance based training models
 - Provide tiered reimbursements to quality
- Preserve public funding for comprehensive child development programs for children at-risk
 - Shared Visions and Head Start



Midwest Child Care Research Consortium

Members of the Consortium

Center on Children, Families and
the Law, U of Nebraska

The Gallup Organization

University of Nebraska

University of Missouri

Iowa State University

University of Kansas

Child Care and Early Childhood
Divisions

Child Care Resource & Referral
and other agencies

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- Iowa Department of Human Services
- Iowa Cooperative Extension
- Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies
- Iowa State University